



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

USCIS MONTHLY



A MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR EMILIO GONZÁLEZ

MARCH 2008 “Securing America’s Promise”

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March marks the fifth anniversary of the Department of Homeland Security and the creation of USCIS. We have made a generation’s worth of progress since 2003 and the days of Legacy INS. Collectively, we made visible progress towards enhancing the security of our immigration system, improving delivery of customer service, and strengthening the infrastructure required to accomplish the ambitious goals we’ve set.

Among our many accomplishments since our creation, I’d like to highlight key agency milestones that are at the heart of who we are and what we do. We have overcome application backlogs inherited from Legacy INS and met goals set by President Bush, representing the culmination of a sustained effort that began as soon as we became operational, and continues through to today.

USCIS has sharpened fraud detection and national security efforts through the creation of the National Security and Records Verification Directorate and the deployment of FDNS officers to USCIS field offices and centers throughout the United States. Our signature employment authorization program, E-Verify, has grown to over 55,000 employer participants and today, over 3 million new hires are checked using the e-Verify program. This past year, USCIS introduced a newly redesigned naturalization test and re-invested in the professional education and training of our employees through the creation of the USCIS Academy. In addition to other program highlights, USCIS initiated an ambitious facilities revitalization program to renovate or replace nearly 40 facilities nation-wide.

Recent enhancements and future efforts at modernization would not be possible without the implementation of our new fee schedule. After an exhaustive year-long fee review and rulemaking process, new application fees will bring in more than \$2.5 billion of our \$2.7 billion annual budget. Ensuring the efficient utilization of these resources is a critical priority.

The credit for these achievements belongs to every one of the more than 17,000 USCIS employees and contractors. We have made great strides over the past five years, and are poised for even greater successes in the years ahead including the further progression of USCIS Transformation efforts, the expansion of E-Verify, and addressing the surge of applications received in FY 2007. As of February 17th we have hired 450 new, permanent full-time adjudicators since the beginning of this fiscal year. We have also garnered interest from more than 200 retirees interested in becoming reemployed annuitants. In addition to hiring efforts, we have enhanced our BASIC training program to ensure that these new employees are job-ready upon graduation.

In recent months, we have also made significant progress on the FBI name check delay in terms of our policies, plans, and operations. We have committed \$14.5 million to the FBI to expand their contract workforce and ensure that steps are taken to resolve pending name check cases. More than 200 contractors are paid for and have been trained to handle the USCIS workload. That is up from a handful of contractors and FBI employees last year. USCIS plans to extend and expand this contractor workforce in FY 2008 through most of FY 2009, as necessary.

These efforts are just the beginning of many new and exciting USCIS initiatives to come. Stay tuned to future issues of USCIS Monthly for more information.

USCIS: AMERICA’S IMMIGRATION SERVICE

NEWS YOU CAN USE...

FROM [USCIS COMMUNICATIONS](#)

[USCIS Announces 18-Month Extension of Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) for Nationals of Somalia - Employment Authorization documents \(EAD\) Extended through September 2008](#) - 03/10/2008

[Update: Biometric Changes For Re-entry Permits and Refugee Travel Documents](#) - 03/05/2008

[USCIS Strengthens Intercountry Adoption Process Rollout of New Forms and Centralized Review Under Hague Adoption Convention](#) - 02/29/2008

[Fact Sheet: Hague Adoption Convention New Forms and Centralized Review for Intercountry Adoptions](#) - 02/29/2008

[Questions and Answers: Background Check Policy Update](#) - 02/28/2008

[USCIS to Offer Free Copies of the Civics and Citizenship Toolkit to Organizations that Serve Immigrants](#) - 02/20/2008

[USCIS Revises Filing Instructions for Petition for Alien Relative](#) - 02/19/2008

[USCIS Consolidates Biometrics Appointment Letter Into One Notice For Adjustment Of Status Applicants](#) - 02/15/2008



USCIS 5-YEAR ANNIVERSARY TOWN HALL EVENT



A standing room only crowd packed the new Tomich Conference Center at USCIS Headquarters in Washington, DC on Friday February 29th for a special Town Hall Event celebrating the DHS / USCIS five-year anniversary.

In addition to remarks from Director Gonzalez that provided a look back on USCIS accomplishments since 2003, DHS Deputy Secretary Paul Schneider was on hand to talk about his work at the Department in support of USCIS. The Acting Deputy Secretary also answered questions from USCIS employees. The Town Hall concluded with a special 5 Year Anniversary Certificate presentation to USCIS component office chiefs and division directors.



USCIS: ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY

OUTSTANDING AMERICANS BY CHOICE

The [Outstanding American by Choice](#) initiative recognizes the achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens. Through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship, recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to the country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans. Throughout the year, USCIS Director González will continue to recognize naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to both their communities and adopted country.

ELIE WEISEL



Nobel Peace Prize Winner Professor Elie Weisel (center) with Director Gonzalez and Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte



Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 in Sighet, Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. He was fifteen years old when his family was deported by the Nazis to the Auschwitz death camp. His mother and younger sister perished, his two older sisters survived. Elie and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in April 1945. After the war, Elie Wiesel studied in Paris and later became a journalist. Persuaded to write about his experiences in the Nazi death camps, the result was his internationally acclaimed memoir, *La Nuit* or *Night*, which has since been translated into more than 30 languages.

Since 1976, he has been the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, where he also holds the title of University Professor. He is a member of the Faculty in the Department of Religion as well as the Department of Philosophy. In 1980, he became the Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. In 1986, Elie Wiesel won the Nobel Prize for Peace, and soon after, Wiesel and his wife Marion established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. He is also the Founding President of the Paris-based Universal Academy of Cultures and the Chairman of The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, an organization he and his wife created to fight indifference, intolerance and injustice. Elie Wiesel has received more than 100 honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning.

Over the course of his life's work, Wiesel has defended the rights of Soviet Jews, Nicaragua's Miskito Indians, Argentina's Desaparecidos, Cambodian refugees, the Kurds, victims of famine and genocide in Africa, of apartheid in South Africa, and victims of war in the former Yugoslavia. He is also the author of more than 40 books of fiction and non-fiction, and for his literary and human rights activities. Wiesel has received numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal and the Medal of Liberty Award, and the rank of Grand-Croix in the French Legion of Honor. A U.S. citizen since 1963, Elie Wiesel lives with his wife in Connecticut.

Established in January 2006, the Outstanding American by Choice initiative has recognized 55 individuals from a variety of backgrounds and nearly all sectors of society. Recipients have come from more than 20 countries, including: Afghanistan, Germany, Iran, Cuba, Pakistan, Haiti, Russia, China, and Mexico.



ADOPTED VALOR: IMMIGRANT HEROES

FOREIGN BORN MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

STAFF SERGEANT LASZLO RABEL - VIETNAM

Staff Sergeant Laszlo Rabel was born in Budapest in 1939 and escaped from Hungary after participating in the failed 1956 revolution against Soviet-backed Hungarian Communist forces. Rabel is thought to have lost several family members and friends in the uprising before he eventually made it across the border into Austria and found refuge in the United States.

Rabel settled in Minnesota, was married, and later enlisted with the Army in 1966 at the age of 27. Staff Sergeant Rabel distinguished himself while serving as leader of Team Delta, 74th Infantry Detachment, 173rd Airborne Brigade. At 1000 hours on November 13, 1968, Team Delta was in a defensive perimeter conducting reconnaissance of enemy trail networks when a member of the team detected enemy movement to the front.



As Staff Sergeant Rabel and a fellow soldier prepared to clear the area, an incoming grenade landed in the midst of the team's perimeter. With complete disregard for his life, Rabel threw himself on the grenade and, covering it with his body, received the complete impact of the immediate explosion.

Through his indomitable courage, complete disregard for his safety and profound concern for his fellow soldiers, Staff Sergeant Rabel averted the loss of life and injury to the other members of Team Delta. For this action, Rabel was decorated with the Medal of Honor. Staff Sergeant Rabel lies at rest in Arlington Cemetery in Virginia.

AT A NATZ CEREMONY NEAR YOU

STORIES FROM RECENT NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES

Stuyvesant High School in New York City was the site of a USCIS Naturalization Ceremony and Outstanding American by Choice Event on February 27th.

Director Gonzalez administered the Oath of Allegiance to more than 300 new Americans, including two Stuyvesant students, while U.S. Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, and her father, Dr. James Chao, were honored as Outstanding Americans by Choice.

Stuyvesant High School has a long and storied connection with New York City's immigrant community, a true meritocracy that has created countless opportunities for the city's best and brightest students for over a century. With a student body that is thirty percent immigrant and another twenty percent first generation American, the school is a mirror of the City itself, combining students from all five boroughs and representing a diverse range of ethnicities from almost every international locale.





“How Do I...?”

HELP A RELATIVE IMMIGRATE TO THE U.S.?

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

One of the most common ways people immigrate is based on a relationship to a U.S. citizen. If you want to help a relative immigrate, start the process by filing a [Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative](#). The I-130 is available on our website at uscis.gov. Sometimes the I-130 can be combined with a permanent resident application by the relative as discussed below. In your petition, you will have to prove your relationship to the person for whom you are filing.

What does the petition do for my relative?

Filing a relative petition and proving a qualifying relationship gives the relative a place in line among others waiting to immigrate based on the same kind of relationship. When the place in line is reached, the relative may be eligible to apply to immigrate. For example: You file a petition for your sister. If we approve it, your petition gives her a place in the line of people from the same country who are also brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens. Your relative's place in line will be based on the date you file your petition. So, there is an advantage to filing as soon as possible. There is no waiting line for a U.S. citizen's parent, spouse, or unmarried child under age 21.

What about other relatives?

The law limits eligibility to the relatives listed above.

What about my relative's family?

In most cases, when your relative's place in line is reached and he/she applies to immigrate, his or her husband or wife and unmarried children under 21 can apply as dependents.

For example: You file a petition for your sister. You cannot directly petition for her husband and children. However, they can apply for immigrant visas with her, when her place in line is reached. On the other hand, a separate petition must be filed on behalf of each person who qualifies as your direct relative, including your children.

For example: To sponsor your mother and father, file a separate petition for each. If they have other children—your brothers and sisters—also file separate petitions for each of them.

For example: You marry a woman with a child. The child will usually qualify as your stepchild if he/she was unmarried and less than 18 when you married the mother. In that case, you would need to file one petition for your wife, and another for the child.

After I file, how long will it be before my relative can immigrate?

The law gives special standing to a U.S. citizen's husband or wife, unmarried children under 21, and parents.

- There is no waiting list for immigration for these relatives.
- The Department of State will invite them to apply for an immigrant visa as soon as we approve your petition. In some cases, the petition can be filed outside the U.S., directly at the U.S. Consulate.
- If they entered legally and are currently in the U.S. (and meet certain other requirements), they may be able to file applications to adjust to permanent resident status.

For other relatives, the combination of high demand and the limits set by law on how many people can immigrate each year means your relative may have to wait several years while petitions that were filed before theirs are served. When your relative reaches the “front of the line”, the Department of State contacts your relative and invites him or her to apply for an immigrant visa. If you are interested in current wait times for visa numbers, see [“Visa Bulletins”](#) on the State Department's website.

Can my relative wait in the United States until becoming a permanent resident?

Your approved relative's petition gives your relative a place in line among those waiting to immigrate. It does not let him/her come to the U.S. or remain here until he/she can apply for permanent residence. He/she should wait outside the U.S. to immigrate legally. If he/she comes or stays without legal status, it will affect his/her eligibility to become a permanent resident when his/her place in line for a visa is reached. However, if your husband or wife, unmarried child under 21, or parent is already in the U.S. after having entered legally (and in certain other circumstances), and applies for permanent residence when you file your petition, then he/she may, with certain exceptions, remain in the U.S. while we process their application for permanent residence.

How do I file?

Follow the I-130 relative petition instructions and check our website for any updates on instructions or fees. Make sure your petition is complete. You will need to submit evidence of your U.S. citizenship, and evidence proving your qualifying relationship to each person for whom you are filing.

For more information see the [How Do I...? Factsheet](#) on this topic.

FACES OF AMERICA

NEW CITIZENS...UNIQUE STORIES



Judge Cormac Carney and the Baird family

On February 15th, Linda Baird, a native of New Zealand, was naturalized in a special ceremony with Judge Cormac Carney at the Ronald Reagan Federal Building in Santa Ana, California. Mrs. Baird's naturalization application was processed by the USCIS Santa Ana Field Office. Her husband, Lt. Col. Robert Baird of the United States Marine Corps, will be departing soon for his third combat tour in Iraq. Mrs. Baird home schools the couple's six children, and was happy to report back to them that she scored 100% on her citizenship test. The Bairs are expecting their seventh child.

Thirty-eight Phoenix, AZ, area residents, ranging in age from 3 to 74 years old took the Oath of Allegiance and received their certificates of citizenship during a special ceremony at the USCIS Phoenix District Office on February 28th.

District Director John Kramar welcomed the applicants, who all sought a certificate of citizenship to recognize U.S. citizenship acquired at birth or by automatic operation of law after birth. In an effort to both expedite presentation of certificates to eligible applicants, and acknowledge this special moment in their lives, USCIS staff conducted a special oath ceremony in conjunction with the presentation of these certificates, rather than administering the oath individually.

There were several sets of siblings among the citizens, including Ashley and Arabela De Leon, two sisters ages 6 and 3 from the Philippines and Felipe, Ana and Dora Miranda Leal from Mexico. These citizens are a reflection of an immigration system based on family unification, as each of these individuals acquired or derived their citizenship thanks to a family member who came before them.



USCIS RECEIVES BETWEEN SIX AND EIGHT MILLION APPLICATIONS AND PETITIONS EVERY YEAR.
EVERY DAY, USCIS OFFICERS WELCOME MORE THAN 2,100 NEW CITIZENS AT LOCATIONS ACROSS THE WORLD.

USCIS AND DHS: SECURING OUR HOMELAND

USCIS FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION CORNER

USCIS Chief of Staff Tom Paar joined members of the Hartford Field Office in Connecticut for a ceremonial Ribbon Cutting at the new USCIS facility in the A.A. Ribicoff Federal Building. The Hartford Field Office moved from the 4th floor to the recently renovated 1st floor. The new space will accommodate the staff of 63 in a more customer-friendly office. The space includes approximately 26,000 square feet with a waiting room, information counters, adjudication offices and a conference/training room.



Hartford Office Ribbon Cutting



The Future Lobby of the USCIS Hialeah Field Office

The Hialeah Field Office in the Miami District is shaping up and work is progressing well. The roof has been installed and work continues on the interior with heating and ventilation ductwork, plumbing and interior walls being built out. Occupancy is anticipated in October/November 2008.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK AT USCIS?

How would you like to work for an agency that changes lives everyday, invests time and money into the career development and growth of its employees, and comprises a diverse workforce providing unique opportunities? USCIS offers all that and more!

[USCIS Career Descriptions](#)

[Prep Guide for Adjudication Officers and Applications Adjudication Test Battery](#)

[Special Programs at USCIS](#)

[Federal Employment Benefits at USCIS](#)

[Current job openings at USCIS](#)

**OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE
NATIONWIDE, APPLY NOW!**



“WE ARE A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS”